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STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

At the 3926th meeting of the Security Council, held on 15 September 1998 in connection with the Council's consideration of the item entitled "The situation in Afghanistan", the President of the Security Council made the following statement on behalf of the Council:

The Security Council strongly condemns the murder of Iranian diplomats in Afghanistan by Taliban combatants. This was a crime committed in flagrant violation of international law and despite repeated assurances by the Taliban leaders guaranteeing the safety and security of the personnel of foreign missions in Mazar-e-Sharif. The killing of Iranian diplomats by Taliban combatants has seriously increased tension in the region.

The Security Council expresses its deepest condolences to the families of the Iranian diplomats and to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It believes that this criminal act should be fully investigated with the participation of the United Nations with a view to prosecuting those responsible. The Council demands that the Taliban release other Iranians detained in Afghanistan and ensure their safe and dignified passage out of Afghanistan without further delay.

The Security Council recalls its condemnation of the murders of members of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan and the personnel of humanitarian agencies in areas controlled by the Taliban and demands that these crimes be investigated and the Taliban ensure the safety and security of all international personnel.

The Security Council expresses its deep concern at the escalating military operations in the Bamyan province and at reports of mass killings of civilians in northern Afghanistan. It demands that the Taliban fully respect international humanitarian law and human rights.

The Security Council calls upon all concerned to exercise maximum restraint. It also calls upon the parties, in particular the Taliban, to take action in response to the strong concerns expressed by the international community, to stop fighting and resume negotiations aimed at achieving a

peaceful settlement of the conflict on the basis of the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and of the Security Council.

The Security Council will keep the situation under close review and is prepared to consider urgently further action.